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INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

When we set about preparing the English edition about eleven years after publishing our monograph on the Irish Franciscans in Prague, we faced a difficult set of issues. These concerned, not only the current developments in research, but also decisions pertaining to translation or adaptation. To begin with, we had to consider our recent work that has focused on documents related to the dissolution of the friary and the departure of the members of its community, since this information needed to be added to the English edition. As regards new publications by Czech historians, these have centred mainly on the artistic heritage of the Irish Franciscans, the legacy left by renowned artists working both in Prague and other parts of Bohemia in the seventeenth century in particular. Similarly, the excellent edition of the diaries of the Prague Archbishop Ernst Adalbert, Cardinal Harrach, as well as recently published studies dedicated to the ecclesiastical history of mid-seventeenth century Bohemia gave us more specific or marginal information, but nothing of major import.

The extensive historiographical literature in English that had been published during those eleven years meant more difficult decisions for us. Works like the magisterial *The Irish Franciscans 1534–1990*, edited by Edel Bhreathnach, Joseph MacMahon and John McCafferty (2009) placed the Prague convent in an eminently mobile and flexible Irish Franciscan community that moved across the continent from Louvain to Rome. For the members of this community, Prague, the capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia, was one of the hubs of a dense network connecting their insular homeland with Catholic centres in continental Europe and with other emigrants who had settled on the mainland. Many an important personality passed through the Prague college. This permanent state of flux of the community, the nature of life in exile and on a mission might be surprising, not only for the general reader, but also for many a Central European historian. However, we felt that the intended Anglophone audience of the present volume would be sufficiently familiar with this perspective, and also able to readily access these remarkable studies in English.

The same holds for more recent interpretations of the history of Ireland in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. We are acutely aware that our coverage of the area is sketchy, and is

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based only on the sources available to us in the 1990s. Therefore, we must beg the reader for indulgence: the primary aim of having our history of the Prague college of the Irish Franciscans translated has always been to make the copious and invaluable material from Czech and Central European archives available in English. Adapting the Czech text so that it organically incorporated the recent research of Irish historians would essentially have meant to write a new book, and address issues such as the current debates pertaining to Irish history for which we lack the expertise. The present volume thus includes updated information pertaining to discoveries made in local archives but, as regards international research from the same period, limits itself to merely referencing the most important essays by way of pointers. It is our modest hope that our work will still be found useful, and will help to fill the gaps relating to what is known internationally about the Irish Franciscans in Prague.

Strahov, 10 May 2014

The authors

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